

**Declaration**  
**Conference on the Cultural Dimension**  
**of the Cooperation among the Arctic Council Member States**  
**Khanty-Mansiysk, January 18, 2006**

Ministers of Culture and other representatives from the Arctic Council Member States met on 17-19 January 2006 in Khanty-Mansiysk, Russia, discussed the tasks of strengthened cooperation among the Arctic Council Member States in the field of culture and declare the following.

I. The Arctic region possesses a wealth of human and natural resources. The Arctic is home to many thriving communities and cultural traditions of great diversity.

The livelihood of many residents of the Arctic region is closely linked to nature. They noted that the indigenous communities and other residents of the region have for generations sustained themselves within their local environment and maintained cultural identities through their application of traditional knowledge in harmony with their environment.

Culture is an essential component in building capacity in traditional communities to deal with environmental, economic, cultural and social challenges for the benefit of sustainable development in the Arctic region. Its population must have access to the cultural heritage, opportunity for the cultural self-expression, protection and development of the cultural tradition. International cultural cooperation is an important tool and promotes the active exchange of cultural experience of the Arctic nations. The role of the culture is important for the economic development of the Arctic region.

The Arctic Council provides for favorable opportunities for development of the cooperation in the circumpolar region. The role of other northern regional organizations in promoting dialogue among members of the cultural community, inter-complementation and synergy of applied efforts is also worth of highest

appreciation. **As an example of cooperation the Arctic Winter Games with youth participating from the Arctic Council Member States can be mentioned.**

**II.** Ministers and other representatives from the Arctic Council Member States applauded the initiative, aimed at the strengthening of the joint activity, the importance of the cultural exchange for understanding the socio-cultural and natural environment of the Arctic region.

On this basis and with a view to the existing national and regional programs to strengthen cultural cooperation in the different parts of the Arctic region, the Ministers and other representatives from the Arctic Council Member States decided to further explore possibilities for increased cooperation in the field of culture in the Arctic region, meaning the following priority areas:

1. Culture-cooperation in the Arctic region in governmental and other formats to better understand the ongoing social and cultural changes, meet new challenges and opportunities for keeping the traditional cultures of the indigenous northern nations, the vivid cultural tradition, taking into consideration the interests of the whole population of the North for the sustainable development in the region. Encouraging cultural programs and projects that promote horizontal linkages and networks in the framework of the Arctic Council.
2. Exchanging legislative experiences and policy on measures to promote cultural innovation and sustainable development in the Arctic.
3. Efforts to strengthen cultural originality of indigenous communities, including the indigenous languages, and further exploring cultural projects.
4. Improving awareness of the Arctic region's cultural diversity.
- 5. Encouraging the creation of an independent Inter-Arctic News Agency with a view to disseminate information on the Arctic Council Member States and exchange of experience.**

6. Exploring the possibilities of involving representatives of indigenous origin and young specialists of the cultural sphere in national and international cultural exchange programs.

**III. Ministers and other representatives from the Arctic Council Member States support the proposal of the Finnish and Russian delegations to hold on a regular basis the Summit of the Ministers of Culture of the Arctic Council Member States.**

**IV. Ministers and other representatives from the Arctic Council Member States request the Arctic Council Senior Officials Committee to consider the possibility of creating a Working Group of the Arctic Council for formation of the social and cultural environment of Northern territories.**

V. Ministers and other representatives from the Arctic Council Member States support the initiatives to further explore possibilities for strengthening their cooperation between States – members of the Arctic Council. The Ministers thank the Government of Russia for its hospitality and for hosting this conference in Khanty-Mansiysk.